

Exhibit No. 12Date 3-3-09

Bill No. _____

**Testimony Given to the Senate Committee on
Finance and Claims
March 3, 2009**

**By Joseph F. McDonald, President
Salish Kootenai College**

Dear Chairman Bales and Committee Members.

Thank you and committee members for holding this hearing. I am here to ask you to add additional funding to HB2 for Tribal Colleges. It is my understanding that stimulus funding is to be used to maintain support for post-secondary education at its present level. The reason is to keep colleges and universities from raising tuition and fees. Congress and the President want to help keep college affordable.

The appropriation for this present biennium is \$1,914,000. The Governors budget for this upcoming biennium originally contained this amount, but due to projected shortfalls in income, the budget was reduced 50%. I am asking that you restore \$677,217 to the Governor's budget and to what is in HB2. This will bring the total appropriation to \$1,588,620 for the biennium. This amount is \$325,380 less than what was appropriated by the past legislature.

The reason for the decrease in our funding request is that we got federal support for first generations descendants of tribally enrolled parents. We estimate that the total non-beneficiary count of 301 will be reduced by 50.

Some people ask why are the tribal colleges coming to the State for a share of the stimulus money when their tribes are receiving stimulus funds. Our answer is this. The Tribal Colleges are asking the State to help defray the cost of the non-beneficiary students that are attending the Tribal Colleges. We do not have access to the stimulus money that our tribes get.

Salish Kootenai College and the six other Montana Tribal Colleges work hard to provide access to college for both American Indians and non-Indians in their service area. At Salish Kootenai College we have non-beneficiary students commuting from both the Missoula and Kalispell areas. We have many from our local area of the Flathead Indian Reservation.

This past year we granted 12 baccalaureates degrees to non-beneficiary students. 38 non-beneficiary students received associate of arts degrees and 12 earned certificates in yearlong programs. Non-beneficiary students made up 36% of the graduating class.

Appropriation to help defray the cost of serving non-beneficiary students is essential to Salish Kootenai College's effort to provide access to quality educational programs and to maintain its accreditation.

Access means that the colleges have open admissions, are affordable, have quality learning resources, adequate facilities, counseling and retention programs, placement assistant and follow-up of graduates. In order to provide access the colleges need to maintain institutional accreditation. To do this colleges need fiscal resources to do it.

We don't want to increase tuition and fees. It is the intent of the Stimulus Act to assist colleges so they don't have to raise the cost of tuition and fees. I urge you to restore the funding to \$3,024 per non-beneficiary students.

Thank you Chairman Bales and committee members.